

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Bureau of Agricultural Economics

Reserve

THE RURAL COMMUNITY AND THE WAR  
A Study of Beaver Crossing, Nebraska

By  
Lawrence B. Lyall  
Social Science Analyst

INTRODUCTORY

Social and economic life in most rural communities has undergone considerable change since the communities were first settled. The process of change continues. This study is one of several made to discover and analyze significant changes and rural life developments under the influences of war. The report attempts to review briefly the cultural background of a typical rural community in eastern Nebraska; its early settlement history; the development of its social and economic life; the adjustments to new conditions; innovations, and stresses; and finally to learn in some detail about its community life under wartime conditions.

Beaver Crossing Community, in the southwest part of Seward County, Nebraska, was chosen. It typifies a community of the transition area between the Corn Belt and the Winter Wheat and Range Livestock types of farming areas of the Great Plains. The close settlement of this community resembles that of Corn Belt communities to the east in contrast to the sparse settlement of the wheat and livestock communities in the west. It lies in a zone about midway between the high- and the low-rainfall areas of the mid-continent region. Its chief industry is agriculture, and corn and winter wheat are its principal crops. Livestock and small grains are important contributory sources of income. Family-size farms predominate; on them the farmers and their families provide all or nearly all the labor. Several nationalities are represented in the population, but persons of German origin are most numerous.

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The development of this community and its village center closely parallels that of other small village-centered communities in the eastern Great Plains. In the years before the automobile, community life centered almost altogether in the village. The automobile, of course, contributed to a change in the pattern of contacts for various services, and some of the village services were discontinued. Distress in the depression of the 1930's caused serious disturbances in the life of the community and brought about many adjustments. More village services were discontinued. Community organizations lost membership and attendance decreased. School enrollments dropped. Financial support of various group activities became a problem, and some were suspended. Several organized groups became virtually inactive. The residents turned increasingly to places outside the community to obtain what was not available in the village center.

The community offers little opportunity for the young people except in farming. They must get jobs elsewhere if they do not want to farm, so many leave the community.

World War II with all its implications and influences has left little outward impress on the community, nor has it materially altered the trends that were already in progress. There has been no apparent disruption of community life. The people are carrying on very much as they did before, though there are new interests and activities, new subjects of talk, and new ties to bind families together. These have not replaced old interests, activities, and ties, or detracted from them.

A major crisis of this nature would naturally have some impact upon a group of people. Of course restrictions on farm machinery, supplies, gasoline, and tires have created problems for farmers, as well as for merchants and business men who supply the farmers. Farmers have had to work without their usual amount of help, and they have had to forego some of their leisure-time activities. This is also true to a considerable extent of the village people who run the stores and other business enterprises. At the same time, the war has increased the demand for products from the farms, and the resulting high prices, together with a series of good crops, have raised the general economic level of the farmers and indirectly of the business men in the village.

Churches form the most important institution in this community. A high proportion of the families who were included in this study (a random sample of 47 farm and village families) reported church attendance by members of the families in 1943. Fraternal organizations were already weak at the onset of the war. They, like some of the other organized groups, have many elderly people in their memberships. The lodges have found it increasingly difficult to add new members during the war. The Chamber of Commerce and the American Legion have ceased to function. Most of the recreational activities formerly sponsored by the village and organized groups have been suspended, partly because of the war but mainly because of decreasing interest or progressive weakening of the sponsoring groups. An outstanding organization is the Beaver Crossing Community Club-- a community-wide organization for social and entertainment purposes. The Homemaker's Clubs, sponsored by the Extension Service are important in the community and have remained constantly strong and active throughout the years since their inception. The village itself



is a haven for old people, many of whom, with others, support an active Townsend Club - the only one in the county. There is a noticeable lack of organized group activity among the farm men, few are members of lodges, and there are no farmer organizations, such as the Farm Bureau, The Grange, or the Farmers' Union. The farmers have cooperative enterprises but as these do not provide any social activities, social interaction among the farm men is considerably less than among the farm women.

### The Community: Its Setting and Values

The Community Setting - Beaver Crossing Community includes approximately 225 farm families living on dispersed farmsteads in a territory of about 8 miles square, and about 150 families living in the village and on small acreages around the village of Beaver Crossing. The population of the village at the last Census was 500 persons. The community is located 16 miles southwest of the county seat town of Seward (population 2,800) and 31 miles west of the city of Lincoln (population 82,000). (Fig. 1.)

1947 A branch of the Big Blue River flows through the center of the community in a south-easterly direction. The stream takes a meandering course along wooded banks in a shallow valley varying in width from a mile to a mile and a half. The land away from the valley levels off to a generally smooth plain. Under favorable weather conditions the soils are capable of producing good yields of corn and small grains, alfalfa, and vegetable crops. Artesian wells in the valley supply water for vegetable gardening, as well as for household and stock use. The area of which the community is a part is characterized by a wide seasonal temperature range and a rainfall that is variable from year to year. Temperatures have ranged from 30 degrees below zero to 114 above. Average annual precipitation over a period of 53 years (1891 - 1943) was 28.6 inches.

Early settlers moved into Seward County along two routes, one of which passed through the southern part of the county and through what is now the Beaver Crossing Community. This route, traveled first in 1860, connected Nebraska City on the Missouri River with the Oregon Trail near Fort Kearney on the Platte River. Over it passed freight trains and prairie schooners by the score on their long trek to the west. Apparently the first settlement in the community was made in 1862 when a settler located a ranch along the trail near where it crossed Beaver Creek. A year later a tavern was built on the banks of the creek to accomodate the westward travelers. The first store was built in 1866 and a postoffice was established in that year under the name of Beaver Crossing. This name was later transferred to the village which was founded soon afterwards on the West Fork of the Blue River 4 1/2 miles southwest of the Beaver Creek crossing.

The village of Beaver Crossing remained hardly more than a crossroads trading place until 1887 when the coming of a railroad stimulated a temporary boom. The



COMMUNITIES IN SEWARD COUNTY, NEBRASKA

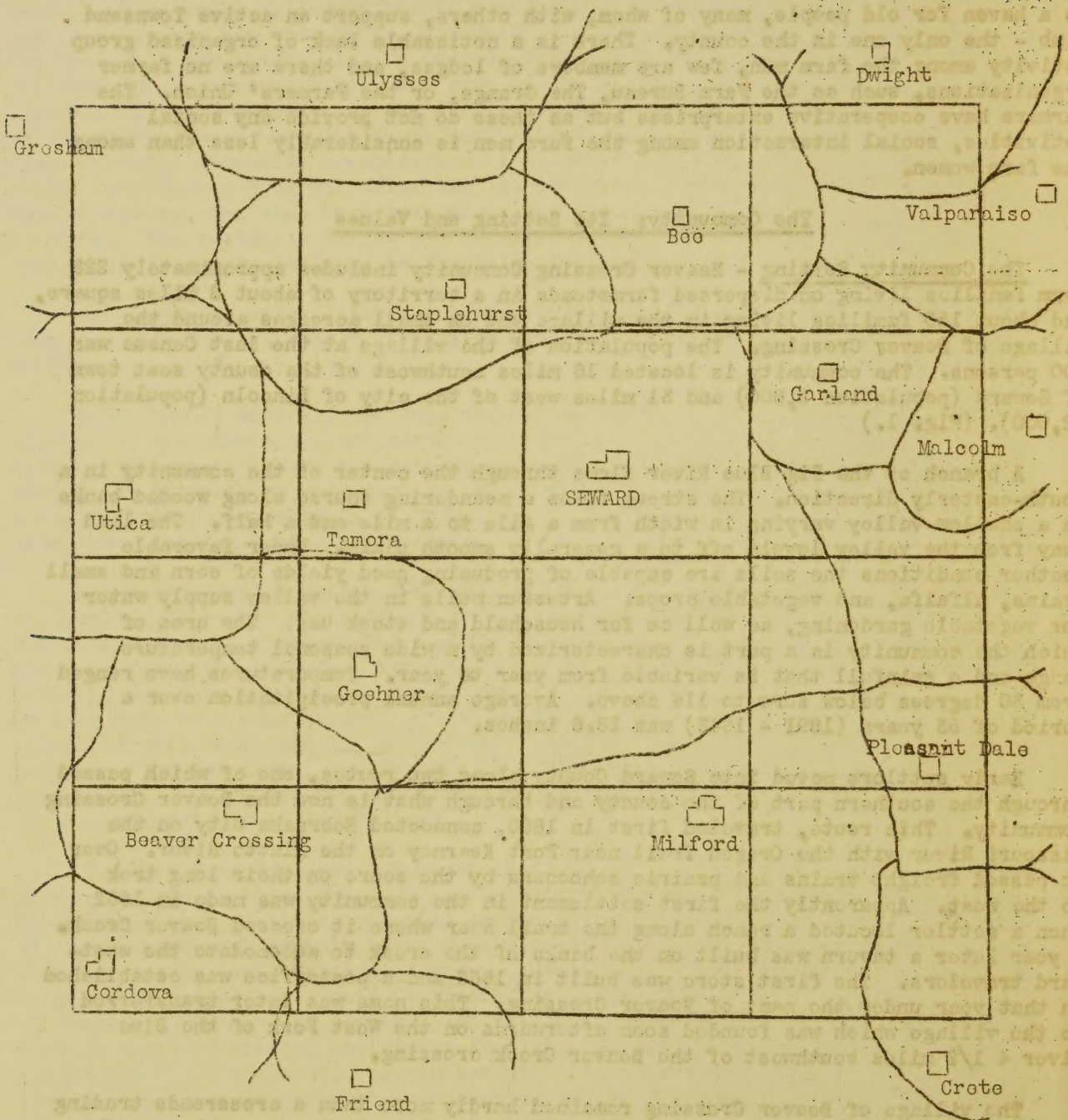


Figure 1.



citizenry then had great hopes that this would some day become a minor metropolis. 1/ There came to be more stores and services than the trade territory would reasonably support. The boom lasted for a year or two, then business activity settled down to a level in keeping with a village of its kind and support.

Parts of four townships comprise the community as it is known today. The townships had a total population of 565 persons in 1870 and 3,391 in 1890. There was only a slight gain then up to 1910. A large decrease in the population of the townships occurred between 1930 and 1940 but the village population remained fairly stable.

Most of the early settlers came from midwestern and eastern States. Many were of German stock. They brought with them the agricultural practices of a more humid area, some of which were not well adapted to this new environment. The farmers had many discouragements, but most remained to establish a new life on this open country.

The first dwellings were log cabins, dugouts, or soddies. Logs for the cabins came from the trees along the streams. The soddies were constructed from blocks of prairie sod cut out by a breaking plow. Dugouts were built in the sides of hills, knolls, or ridges and were fronted with sod, logs, or lumber. Frame houses replaced the pioneer buildings when transportation facilities made it possible to bring in lumber.

Schools were established early. The first school houses were built of sod and served several purposes for neighborhood life centered in them. Church groups formed slowly, as the settlers had different creeds and beliefs. Keen activity centering around fraternal organizations and social clubs seems to have occurred about the turn of the century. Only four of the original ten lodges are active in the community today. Some were short-lived, but an interesting characteristic of most was the high membership they had at some time of their existence.

Much of the social interaction in the community now as in the past comes through organized group activity. The people of the village center and of the surrounding country work together in satisfying the needs for church services,

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1/ A Beaver Crossing Bugle dated May, 1887 said, "The depot was not located until May 12, but not withstanding the risk and uncertainty in its delay two general stores, a bank building, a real estate office, billiard hall and printing office were erected, and two lumber yards moved in. Now two livery stables, furniture store, a large hotel, implement house, two elevators, a meat market, and a bank building are preparing to build. With a territory nearly ten miles in every direction to draw trade from, there is no reason why Beaver Crossing should not make a lively town". In an earlier issue the paper had stated, "Upon the whole we have every reason to rejoice at the present growth of Beaver Crossing and its future prospects. The iron horse has already put vigorous life into the town, and much may be expected in the future. . . Boom's the word; let 'er roll!"



education, fellowship, recreation, and public welfare. There are few, if any, social and economic barriers. These organized groups help to integrate community life and so to influence the stability of the community, its trade and social life. They bring about a community consciousness and a community spirit. This in turn enables concerted action on a common problem. Vigorous leadership, which is necessary to the vitality of individual organizations, appears to be somewhat lacking in this community, however.

Most of the organized group activity is centered in the village. Changes in population resulting from the depression and new customs arising out of technological development over the years, and changes in ways of trading, have combined to weaken the organizational structure. This has meant a growing dependency upon outside sources. The village is no longer the thriving, self-sufficient service center it used to be and organized activities have decreased.

The village contains many old people, many of whom receive old-age pensions. Their number has increased, especially during the depression years, but the number in the younger age groups has decreased. This, of course, has had some effect on the vitality of the village, for it has lost much of that element of the population which makes for a dynamic community center, activates community enterprises, takes an interest in community development, and supplies leadership in village and community undertakings. Even before the war there were too few young people to stimulate village and community activity. As few of the elderly people are heavy consumers, they contribute less to the support of the village merchants than younger families would. Both village and country have of course lost additional younger people during the war.

There are three Protestant churches and one Catholic church in the community. The total membership of the four churches in 1940 was 460, and in 1943 it was 435. Approximately 35 percent of the membership was from the village and the rest from the open country, in both years. Combined average attendance at worship services in 1943 was 230. In 1940, all the churches had resident pastors but in 1943, two had resident pastors and two were served from outside the community. Worship services were conducted weekly in all the churches in both years. Each congregation owns its own church building. Annual budgets in 1943 ranged from \$600 to \$2,000. None of the churches is strong enough individually to act as an integrating force in the community. All cooperate readily, though the extent of actual cooperation is rather limited.

Nine one-room schools dot the open country of the community, and a combination elementary and high school is located in the village center. The long-time trend in elementary enrollments has been downward. This is true of the high-school enrollments as well, though to a much lesser degree. Elementary enrollments dropped 37.1 percent from 1930 to 1940, and 5.4 percent from 1940 to 1943. There was a slightly larger drop in high school enrollments after 1940 than before, which reflects in part the earlier heavy decline in the elementary enrollments. High-school enrollments declined 6.4 percent from 1930 to 1940 and 9.1 percent from 1940 to 1943. The schools provide important extra-curricular activities for the young people, as well as social and entertainment outlets for adults.



There are four lodges in the community - Masons, Odd Fellows, Eastern Star, and Rebekahs. The Masons and Eastern Stars meet monthly; the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs meet bi-monthly. Total membership of the four lodges was about 340 in 1930, 180 in 1940, and 167 in 1943. Programs of the lodges include social and fraternal activities.

The American Legion Post was a casualty of the depression. Membership dropped to a point where its charter could no longer be maintained although individual members worked hard to renew the interest. The Legion was one of the most active organizations in the community in the 1920's and early 1930's. In 1929 and again in 1931, it received national citations for achievements. The American Legion Auxiliary continues to be active, though there were only 15 members in 1943.

There are five Extension Homemaker's clubs in the community. Total membership in 1943 numbered 99, with roughly a representation of about 25 percent of all the families in the community. One club is composed entirely of village women; another is composed of both village and farm women; and three are composed of farm women.

The Community Club contributes most to the integration of the community. It was organized to provide community entertainment. It meets monthly, except for the three summer months, and has consistently drawn the support of the community residents. Its programs include speeches, short talks, music, and plays. Lunches provided by members are served four times a year. The membership included approximately 95 families in both 1940 and 1943. Attendance varies considerably according to the programs offered, average attendance in 1943 was about 175 persons, though as high as 450 to 500 persons have attended special programs.

Other formal organizations in the community include the Beaver Crossing Women's Club, a WCTU organization, Kensington Club, Townsend Club, a Parent Teachers Association, and a High School alumni association. The Women's Club, a study group composed almost entirely of village women, is primarily concerned with civic welfare. Its reported membership was 40 in 1940 and 38 in 1943. The WCTU is heavily weighted with aged members. Its membership has been gradually dwindling; it had an average of 25 members in 1930's and in 1943 only 15 members. The Townsend Club, the only organization of its kind in the county, has a larger membership and greater participation than most of the organized groups - it had 59 members in 1943 and draws its support from a large group of elderly people who live in the village. The club meets twice a month, and though its principal objective is to promote an old-age pension plan, much of its activity is social in nature. The Kensington Club, a small women's social group, had 17 members in 1943 divided about equally between town and country. The Parent Teachers Association, composed of 12 families living in one of the rural school districts, meets monthly in the local school house. The alumni association meets annually, at a banquet; attendance is always high, even in these wary years. In 1943, 93 persons attended; it was estimated then that at least 75 alumni were in the armed forces. There are numerous informal card clubs in the community.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the life here. Little change has occurred in the type of farming since sod-breaking days and in the dependency of the community upon agriculture.



The service pattern in the village center has undergone considerable change. Most of the change took place after the automobile came, they expanded the area of trading of the community residents. The impact of the drought and depression in the 1930's was especially severe on business in the village. Change in the service pattern since the war has been mostly a continuation of the trend already in process, though perhaps accelerated by the war. Among the village enterprises discontinued in 1940 and afterwards were a dry-good store, a garage, a drug store, a hardware store, a cafe and grocery store, a beauty shop, a used-furniture store, and one or two filling stations. Two doctors have died and no one has taken their place. Two churches lost their pastors and have not been able to replace them. The local newspaper is now printed outside the community. Freight-train service has been reduced to one train a day. There remain in the village only the more essential services and marketing facilities usually found in a small rural village. Residents of the community must go elsewhere for most drug goods, for clothing, shoes and furniture. Recreational facilities are very limited. There is one medical doctor and one dentist in the village, but there are no hospital facilities. There has long been no passenger service, either bus or train, in or out of the community. The cooperative enterprises located in the village are important. They include a credit association which replaced two banks that closed in 1933, an elevator association, an oil cooperative, a locker system, and a small canning factory. The cooperatives will undoubtedly contribute to the maintenance of the services that remain in the community.

Community Values - The formal and informal activities of a people, their ideas and attitudes, reveal the things they consider important. This represents the system of values which gives meaning to their lives. The following are general statements regarding the more important values cherished by the people of the community.

Attachment to the Land: Most residents of the community have lived there for a long time. The average number of years of residence of all households heads included in the study was 34.9 years in the county, 25.9 years in the community, and 22.7 years in the neighborhoods. This long residence has developed a sentimental attachment for the land and the buildings, that may extend even to old roads, a stream, the village itself. The people have therefore come to have a stake in the land. They and in many cases their fathers before them, invested their earnings and even a part of themselves in the land and its improvements. They have contributed to the development and maintenance of schools, churches, and other community enterprises. Farming as a chosen way of life also contributes to this attachment for the land.

Security: People of the community want a reasonable degree of security. Recent experiences with hard times have made them more conscious of this need. In the main, security for them rests in the ownership of land -- land that is free from debt and capable of producing a good living.

Neighborliness: The people are friendly and sociable. They appreciate neighborliness in one another. Neighborhood ties are generally strong and long lasting. Visiting and sharing machinery and labor and group activities make for a close relationship. Families share with one another in the joys and sorrows that come. A helping hand is readily extended to a family in need.



**Family Life:** The family is important as a social and work unit among these people. Most farms are of the family type and family members work closely together at the job of making a living from the land. Members of a family usually go together to social and recreational affairs. Members away from home return frequently to visit. A person obtains community standing by providing adequately for his family and by raising his children to be respectable, hard-working citizens.

**Worth of an Individual:** These people attach importance to honesty and industry in a person. An individual loses the respect of his neighbors if he is indifferent to their welfare and inconsiderate of their rights, if he is careless with borrowed tools, and if he is slovenly about his farm and lazy in his work. Community leaders are generally progressive, intelligent, neighborly, interested in community development and progress, and are reasonably successful in business or farming.

**Religion:** There is a practical respect among the people of the community for religious teachings and moral values. Considerable social interaction in the community comes about through the church activities.

**Education:** Education is regarded as a requisite to a better living and good citizenship. Most families strive to put their children through high school, and most of the youth who grow up in the community do attend it. Extension activities draw the support of many families who seek to improve their farm and home life.

#### CHANGING ROLE OF THE RURAL VILLAGE IN THE GREAT PLAINS

The most significant thing about this rural community is the long-time adjustment that has occurred in the role of the village as a service and activity center of the community. What has happened here has happened in many of the villages throughout most of the Great Plains, though in varying degree according to the age of settlement and density of population. Agriculture in the older sections of the Plains, as in eastern Nebraska, is highly stabilized. In general, the communities there are well adjusted to the changed social and economic situation which has evolved since the coming of automobiles, good highways, and modern methods of merchandizing. There has been a progressive realignment of trade territories and gradual shift of services with the village centers assuming a different role than they have heretofore played in rural community life. The small village-centered communities have become integrated with the larger, town-centered communities. Each community is no longer a separate entity in itself, but a part of a larger complex. The village center continues to perform a useful function for the rural family in much the same way the corner store does for the urban family. The more specialized functions have shifted to the larger centers, now that they are more easily accessible to the farm people. Some of the small villages will eventually disappear but it is safe to say that not all will, so long as they continue to provide many of the essential services needed by the rural people.

Beaver Crossing, will probably provide produce markets, a grocery store or two, possibly a hardware and implement store, elevators, filling stations, a machine shop or garage, a freezer locker, and schools and churches for a long time. In spite of considerable change in the last 25 years, its population has remained



fairly constant although the composition has changed; the proportion of aged people has increased considerably, partly because of farmers who have retired and moved to the village. This is equally true of many rural villages and contributes to the decrease in the services available in them.

#### THE BEAVER CROSSING COMMUNITY IN WARTIME

Effects of the War on the Community - Community life in general has not changed much during the war. Conversations include discussions of war developments, rationing, bond buying, and scrap drives, but actions and habits have changed only in relation to shortages of labor, machinery, equipment, tires and gasoline. These shortages have not been serious, for the people were accustomed to doing without many things. There has been more work by the family, better care of machinery and equipment, and less use of gasoline and tires.

Farm incomes have increased materially since the war started, through the combination of high prices for agricultural products and good crops. Nearly all farmers in the study reported making more money in 1943 than in 1940 and most employed village residents reported higher incomes in 1943. But a large number of aged people in the village had little or no income in either 1940 or 1943, though many of them received old-age pensions. Church and organization finances have improved slightly since 1940. The larger purchasing power has not been wholly satisfied because of wartime shortages. They need new machinery, cars, and trucks. Many would like to improve their farms and homes which were necessarily neglected in the distress period. Some have managed to make improvements. The people have apparently taken the shortages good naturedly.

Prewar conditions and trends in the community were largely responsible for the fact that the number of services in the village center decreased from 1940 to 1943, which naturally brought about some shift in the trading habits of the people. There are seven towns and villages within a close proximity of Beaver Crossing village - Seward, Utica, Friend, York, Goehner, Cordova, and Milford. At least three of these offer a larger variety of services than does the community center; two offer about the same; and two have fewer services. The city of Lincoln with its many stores and services is close enough for occasional shopping and pleasure trips. The people go to Seward, the county seat, for business reasons mainly, but shopping and recreation are often combined. On the whole, the war has caused very little change in regard to the places where they go for their services though there has been less travel to the more distant points, such as Lincoln.

Travel restrictions have reduced attendance at social gatherings and meetings to some extent. Then farm people had less time for them in view of the good crops and the shortages of labor and machinery, and a considerable number of young people were drawn into the armed forces. Church attendance decreased in two churches, remained about the same in one, and increased in one, between 1940 and 1943. Some church activities were curtailed or dropped when two of the churches lost their resident pastors. The long-time downward trend of school enrollments continued after 1940. The drop in lodge membership after 1940 was small and social activities were curtailed somewhat; average attendance at the meetings in 1943, though relatively low, was not much lower than before the war. Extension Home-



maker's Clubs were about as active in 1943 as in 1940. Homemaking lessons were given a definite wartime slant with greater emphasis on ways of conserving foods, on canning methods, food preservation and gardening, and on nutritional standards for families. The Beaver Crossing Community Club had difficulty in finding talent for its programs as a result of the exodus of young people to war services and to war jobs and average attendance at the meetings dropped slightly.

Organized War Activities - Wartime programs in Seward County were coordinated and directed from the county level with local leadership usually assuming responsibility for obtaining participation at the community level. County programs were carried on simultaneously with State and National programs, and publicity over the radio and in the newspapers reached into each community. Committees were set up in the county seat to direct the programs. Local organized groups assisted or sponsored different programs. The county chapter of the Red Cross, for instance, sponsored Red Cross surgical-dressing and first-aid classes in each community; the Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors sponsored an aluminum drive; an oil dealers' association in the county with the help of the Salvage Chairman of the County Defense Committee sponsored rubber salvage, and filling stations acted as receiving agents; the Salvage Committee of the County Defense Committee in cooperation with implement dealers of the county, AAA Committeemen, and the Seward Chamber of Commerce, sponsored the several scrap drives; the County Defense Committee sponsored air-raid protection; and the women's division of the County Salvage Committee sponsored the fats salvage in which meat dealers acted as receivers. There was no organized effort in the county in the first two bond drives; the banks in the county were the agents for bond sales in the second drive. Beginning with the third drive, an organized effort was made to reach each community and neighborhood in the county. The County Agent organized the rural areas, using the school district as the units of organization. He appointed victory leaders, usually school board officers, in each district. Each leader canvassed his school district. School children played an important part in familiarizing the people with the different drives and in bringing about participation. Educational programs on nutrition, victory gardens, canning and home storage were carried out entirely by the County Extension Service. In 1942, school district victory leaders canvassed the school districts, to secure pledges in the Victory Garden program. In 1943, printed matter regarding victory gardens was passed out by the County Agent, but the districts were not canvassed. Canning, home storage, and nutrition information was given through the Homemaker's Clubs.

These wartime programs were the principal ones to reach the people of the Beaver Crossing Community. The families were evidently aware of these programs and the war-related activities that did not reach into the community. Information on them came from so many sources that none of the family heads could readily identify the source relative to a particular program. Often they heard of a drive when a school district officer canvassed the school district, when school children brought home information about it, at a meeting of some local organization, or in conversation with a neighbor or friend. More often the first word came through the radio and newspapers.

There was little participation among the people in the war-related programs other than the scrap, rubber, and bond drives, and those in the Homemaker's Clubs.



Red Cross surgical dressing were made in the village, and attendance was largely of village women. A local doctor conducted one series of first-aid classes in which 25 persons took part, nearly all of whom were from the village. Air-raid protection was little more than a gesture in the village. Various local organizations in the community - lodges, clubs, and the churches - contributed to the war effort, mainly through sponsorship or endorsement of war programs within the community.

FAMILY AND NEIGHBORHOOD LIFE IN WARTIME - EFFECTS  
ON FAMILY ORGANIZATION AND PARTICIPATION

The war has had little direct effect on family and neighborhood life in this community aside from minor dislocations and inconveniences arising from wartime shortages and restrictions. The people, however, are much aware of its implications. Nearly one out of five households included in the study had members in the armed forces. One household had lost a son in action, and there were two other known casualties among service men from the community at the time of the survey.

High prices for farm products and the needs of the war spurred the farmers to greater effort. Weather conditions in 1942 and 1943 were especially favorable to crops but the labor force was reduced and new labor-saving equipment could not be bought. Much of the farm machinery in the community was old and worn and some was obsolete so farmers had to do more planning and improvising; had to work harder and longer. The traditional farm-family work pattern remained unchanged for the most part, except that family members put more time in farm work and had less leisure time, particularly in the busy seasons.

Farmers said they exchanged work less in 1943 than before the war - less than one out of four farmers indicated more exchange work - but there has always been considerable exchange of work and machinery among most farmers in the community.

There were no occupational changes among these farm household heads as a result of the war. One had advanced from farm laborer to farmer by way of an FSA loan. There were a few occupational exchanges among the village household heads. Jobs in the village increased after 1940, so only a few of the aged and the somewhat incapacitated were unemployed at the time of the survey. Increased farm incomes enabled farmers to pay off debts and to buy more if they could find what they wanted. The businessmen in the village have profited from the higher incomes of the farmers.

There was little change in the proportion of meat which was produced for home consumption in 1943, compared with before the war. Farmers have customarily produced most of their meat and village residents naturally only a little. The rural people raised more vegetables in 1943 than in 1940 partly because of the Victory Garden program. Most of the village residents reported raising all or nearly all of their vegetables in both years.



The village center offers very little in the way of commercial entertainment. Most community residents went infrequently to nearby towns and to Lincoln for movies, dances, and other entertainment of a commercial nature in 1943. Attendance at an occasional free movie offered by merchants in the village and in nearby centers represented the total movie-going of many of the families but this had been true before the war.

Families reported more listening to the radio and more reading of newspapers since the war began.

Family participation in the war programs varied with the programs. The bond, scrap, and rubber salvage drives received the highest participation. The schools took part in several programs; pupils were stimulated to buy war stamps, to contribute to the Red Cross, and to collect paper and scrap metal. On one occasion the Seward Chamber of Commerce sponsored a contest among the schools of the county, offering a prize to the school turning in the greatest quantity of scrap per student. Pupils helped to keep the parents informed of the war programs. School district officers led occasionally, as in the Victory Garden sign-up and bond drives. In fact, the school district was usually the organizational unit by which families were reached.

An analysis was made of the extent to which community residents in the study went to the community center and to places outside the community to buy groceries, clothing, hardware and equipment, for commercial recreation or entertainment such as movies and dances, to attend church and church functions, and to obtain medical service. Complete information for all services offered in the village was not available. The results showed, however, that a relatively large proportion of the contacts for a number of essential services are made outside the community; this was equally true before the war. Of the total service contacts in 1943 for one or more of the seven services included, 50.2 percent were made exclusively in the community center, 9.5 percent were made in both the community center and other service centers and 40.3 percent were made in the service centers outside the community.

No adequate measurement can be made of the vigorous social interaction that takes place in the community. Most activities are unorganized and informal and so do not lend themselves readily to statistical analysis. The study gives only a rough insight at the most.

Family visiting is the most common type. Forty percent of the families included in the study estimated their visiting with other families, both in the community and outside, to be less in 1943 than before the war; 47 percent thought their visiting to be about the same, and 8.5 percent thought they had visited more in 1943.

Among other frequent informal activities are cooperative dinners, wedding anniversary and birthday parties, entertainments for visiting relatives and friends, and card parties. The usual contacts in the neighborhoods, over the fence, along the road, and at the farms are appreciated as well as the contacts in the village center, which is the congregating place when farm work is slack or hampered by bad weather, and on shopping days. Apparently no appreciable change with regard



to these contacts has occurred during the war.

More than three-fourths of the families reported church attendance in 1943. Of this number, 43.6 percent said that one or more members attended regularly and 34 percent said that they attended irregularly. Only 23.6 percent of the first groups reported less participation in 1943 than in 1940, whereas 63.2 percent reported the same, and 13.2 percent reported more.

# TABLES

Table 1.- Population distribution in four townships, Seward County, Nebraska  
1870 - 1940

Township 1/	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
K	---	468	784	712	759	704	687	580
L	---	561	817	701	600	562	525	419
M.	---	595	1,008	1,263	1,487	1,425	1,369	1,296
N	---	642	782	717	614	612	627	513
Total	565	2,266	3,391	3,393	3,460	3,303	3,208	2,808
Beaver Crossing Village	---	---	---	359	542	543	522	550

Source: U. S. Census

1/ The 16 townships in Seward County are lettered alphabetically. Parts of Township K, L, M, and N comprise the community under study.

Table 2.- Age distribution of household members (total members in household at any time 1940-1943), in sample of 47 families

Age groups	Number of members	Percent of members
Under 15 years	51	27.3
15 - 44 years	76	40.6
45 - 64 years	46	24.6
65 years and over	14	7.5



Table 3. - Size of household, 1940 and 1943, of 47 families in sample

Number members in household :	1940 :	1943 :
:	No. households :	No. households :
1	2	3
2	11	13
3	9	9
4	11	14
5	5	2
6	5	3
7	2	2
8	0	0
9	2	1
Average size of household	3.87	3.47

Table 4. - Length of residence in county, community and in neighborhood of the 47 families in sample

Years of residence :	County :	Community :	Neighborhood :
:	No. families :	No. families :	No. families :
1 - 9 years	5	12	15
10 - 19 years	7	9	9
20 - 29 years	10	9	9
30 - 39 years	3	5	4
40 - 49 years	7	4	5
50 - 59 years	9	5	3
60 years and over	6	3	2
Average years of residence	34.9	25.9	22.7

Table 5. - Estimated general economic status of 47 families in sample

Economic Status :	Number of families :
Very low	3
Low	12
Medium	24
High	6
Very high	2







Table 6. - Estimated income change of 47 families in sample, 1940-1943

Income change		:	Number of families
		:	
No change			5
Decrease			4
Increase			31
Not ascertainable			7
Estimated percent increase		:	Number of families
		:	
1	- 14 percent		3
15	- 34 percent		7
35	- 54 percent		13
55	- 74 percent		1
75 percent and over			7

Table 7. - Participation in principal formal organizations in Beaver Crossing Community in 1943 and comparison with 1940

Formal Organizations	Percent of families participating, by extent			Percent of total participating families with a comparison between 1943 and 1940		
	Regularly	Irregularly	None	More	Same	Less
Church, Worship Service (adults)	42.6	34.0	23.4	13.2	63.2	23.6
Church, Sunday School (adults)	17.0	6.4	76.6	0	61.5	38.5
Church, Sunday School (Children)	29.8	8.5	61.7	27.8	61.1	11.1
Church, Ladies Aid Societies	21.3	23.4	55.3	4.3	60.9	34.8
Church, Young Peoples Org. 1/	10.6	2.1	87.3	0	66.7	33.3
School, PTA 1/	2.1	2.1	95.8	0	100.0	0
4-H Clubs 1/	4.2	0	95.8	33.3	33.3	33.3
Community Club	23.4	27.7	48.9	18.5	51.9	29.6
Women's Club 1/	6.4	8.5	85.1	20.0	30.0	50.0
Homemaker's Club	27.7	4.2	68.1	16.7	50.0	33.3
Fraternal Org's. 1/	2.1	2.1	95.7	40.0	0	60.0

1/ Too few interviewed to be significant for comparing relative participation in 1940 and 1943.



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Table 8. - Membership and attendance of formal organizations in community

Membership and attendance	: 1943	: 1940
Total number of organizations <u>1/</u>	14	16
Total membership of organizations	421	573
Male	92	178
Female	329	395
Average attendance at regular meetings	190	239
Average attendance per meeting	13.6	14.9

1/ Not included are Community Club, PTA organizations, the new Boy and Girl Scouts, farmers' cooperative organizations, and card clubs. Average attendance at programs of Community Club was about 175 in 1943 and about 200 in 1940. The only PTA takes in about 12 families in one school district; average attendance at its meetings was about 36 in 1940 and in 1943.

Table 9. - Informal participation of 47 families in sample in 1943 and comparison with 1940

Informal activities	: Percent participated in	: Percent of total participating families with a comparison between 1943 and 1940		
		: More	: Same	: Less
Attendance at school programs by adults	72.4	9.5	59.5	31.0
Neighborhood clubs, parties, affairs by adults	34.0	9.5	57.1	33.3
Dances by adults <u>1/</u>	14.8	7.7	38.5	53.8
Movies by adults and children	61.7	19.4	48.4	32.3
Reading newspapers	95.7	36.4	63.6	0
Listening to the radio	87.0	55.8	30.2	14.0

1/ Too few participants to be significant for comparing relative participation in 1940 and 1943.







Table 10. - Churches in Beaver Crossing Community

Characteristics of churches in community	1940	1943
Number of churches <u>1/</u>	4	4
Number of churches with resident pastor	4	2
Number of churches with full-time pastor	3	1
Total church membership in community	460	435
Village	163	148
Open Country	297	287
Average total attendance at worship services	201	230
Village	66	80
Open Country	135	150
Total number of formal organizations or activities sponsored by the churches	16	11

1/ These churches include Methodist, Evangelical, Christian, and Catholic.  
All located in the community center. Some residents attend churches outside the community.

Table 11. - Schools in the Beaver Crossing Community

	1943- 1944	1940- 1941	1935- 1936	1930- 1931
Number of one-room schools (open)	8	8	9	8
Number of one-room schools (closed)	1	1	0	1
Number of combination high and grade schools	1	1	1	1
Total number of teachers	16	17	18	17
Ratio of teachers to pupils	14.8	14.9	18.7	21.1
Number of months in school year	9	9	9	9

Table 12. School enrollments for given years in Beaver Crossing Community

Type of schools	1943- 1944	1940- 1941	1935- 1936	1930- 1931
Open Country elementary	80	98	123	130
Village elementary	77	68	120	134
<u>Combined elementary enrollment</u>	157	166	243	264
High School	80	88	93	94
<u>Total School enrollment</u>	237	254	336	358



Table 10. - Churches in Forest-Growing Community

Characteristics of churches in community		1942	1941
Number of churches	✓	4	4
Number of churches with resident pastor		4	4
Number of churches with full-time pastor		2	2
Total church membership in community		180	180
Worshipers		180	180
Open country		180	180
Average total attendance at worship services		201	201
Worshipers		201	201
Open country		201	201
Total number of formal organizations or activities sponsored by the churches		12	12

✓ These churches include Methodist, Evangelical, Christian, and Catholic.  
 All located in the community center. Some residents attend churches outside the community.

Table 11. - Schools in Forest-Growing Community

		1942	1941	1940	1939
Number of one-room schools (open)		2	2	2	2
Number of one-room schools (closed)		1	1	1	1
Number of kindergarten and					
Grade schools		1	1	1	1
Total number of teachers		12	12	12	12
Ratio of students to teacher		14.8	14.8	14.8	14.8
Number of months in school year		9	9	9	9

Table 12. - School enrollment for given years in Forest-Growing Community

Type of school		1942	1941	1940	1939
Open country elementary		80	80	80	80
Worshipers		77	77	77	77
Children in country enrollment		127	127	127	127
High school		80	80	80	80
Total school enrollment		227	227	227	227

Table 13. - Number and percentage of service contacts by location of service center, 1940 and 1943 1/

Service center	1943		1940	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Beaver Crossing village	142	50.2	128	50.2
Beaver Crossing village and other service centers	27	9.5	27	10.6
Other service centers	114	40.3	100	39.2
Total	283	100.0	255	100.0

1/ Obtaining of one or more of seven services by community residents in the sample, within the community or outside: buying groceries, clothing, hardware, and equipment; obtaining commercial recreation or entertainment; attending church and its functions, and seeing a doctor.

Table 14. - Type of participation in war-related activities (sample of 46 families)

War activity	Number Participating	Number of families by type of participation		
		Donation or Bond Purchase	Service	Attended meeting
Scrap salvage	33	32	2	0
Rubber salvage	30	29	2	0
Fats salvage	12	12	0	0
War Bond drives	32	32	3	0
Victory gardens and canning	16	0	2	13
Nutrition	9	0	1	9

Table 15. - Source of information on war-related activities (Sample of 46 families)

War activity	Newspaper	Co. Agt.	Meeting	Neighbors	School	Solicited	AAA
	Radio	Ext. Club					
Scrap salvage	32	0	0	4	6	0	2
Rubber salvage	31	0	0	6	5	0	2
Fats salvage	33	1	1	3	3	0	2
War Bond drive	28	0	3	1	4	5	1
Victory gardens and canning	12	15	2	3	3	1	5
Nutrition	8	11	1	2	0	0	0



